

BORN TO RIDE

Harley-Davidson—from motorcycle to American legend.

BY CARL CAIATI

Motorcycles are like racehorses. You want to have the best bloodlines and that means to have a Harley, if you can. It's the most sought after motorcycle in the world, not just here, but in Japan, Europe, all around the globe.

—Malcolm Forbes

● Malcolm Forbes knew motorcycles. His collection of 2-wheelers was extensive. He also knew the mystique of the Harley-Davidson nameplate. But acknowledging the Harley magic and defining it are two different matters. Japanese motorcycle manufacturers have been trying to nail down the Harley mystique for over a decade while pumping out their own versions of the American big V-twin. Their copies may have similar visual cues, but they still fall far short in that all-important intangible—Harley-Davidson.

Just what is it about Harley-Davidson that has embroidered it into the fabric of Americana? It's a look, a sound, a riding position, a certain style. One thing it's not is technically cutting-edge hardware. As a matter of fact, while some Japanese motorcycle engines are pushing new frontiers in performance-vehicle powerplant technology as a whole, Harley-Davidson is considered by some technoids as a dinosaur with its pushrod overhead-valve V2—the evolution of a basic design they've had since the mid-'20s. Paradoxically, Harley has done what no Japanese bikemaker is able to do—play up the current nostalgia craze by recreating the look of its 1940s and '50s machines in its Springer and Heritage editions. In fact, many Americans associate the Harley-Davidson name with the '50s look—massive size, flashy chrome, that distinctive “potato, potato” idle and raucous, straight-through exhaust note.

Visually, no other motorcycle captures the classic lines of a Harley hardtail—a design used by the Milwaukee-based firm up until the '50s. These bikes had the rear wheel attached solidly to the frame. In other words, no rear suspension at all. Spine-compressing would be a kind way to describe the ride. But there

around of social values, image-conscious Hollywood celebrities, who at one time wouldn't have been caught dead on a Harley, now consider it chic to tool around on the big, flashy machines. But the motor-mounted celluloid outlaws had their roots in real life. “Wild One” was based on an incident involving a motorcycle gang taking

ing over the town of Hollister, California. On the flip side of the ledger, Harley-Davidson has long been the motorcycle of choice for large numbers of police departments.

American pride runs strong in the Harley mystique. In the wake of the import motorcycle onslaught that started in the '60s, Harley devotees dug in their heels with a stubborn anti-import attitude. The more dominant the Japanese became in the marketplace, the stronger the Harley fans' resolve to buy American. Interestingly enough, Honda unwittingly

added to the Harley image with its '60s ad slogan: “You meet the nicest people on a Honda.” It was a veiled and underhanded swipe at the Harley rider, who was by implication somehow mad, bad and dangerous to know. Sure, it helped sell Hondas, but it also added to the macho Harley image.

Much of that image was of a rider who was highly individualistic. Harleys, more than any other motorcycle, are customized and personalized by their owners. It all started back in the '50s, when the thing to do was to bob



was an elegant simplicity to the motorcycle's profile, showing a frame that carried the top tube in a straight line from the neck clear back to the rear axle. Then there was the way the massive V-twin totally filled the engine space. Combine this with a heavy-looking front end carrying a deeply valanced fender and a wide, fat gas tank that housed the speedometer and warning lights, and the result was a motorcycle that achieved almost magical proportions.

Hollywood and Harley had a marriage that definitely wasn't made in heaven. But the silver screen unquestionably added to the marque's mystique, even though it was at the expense of its image. Film classics such as “Wild One,” with Marlon Brando, showed the good guy riding a British-made Triumph, while the bad guys went about their nasty deeds aboard Harleys. Interestingly, in a turn-



BORN TO RIDE

PM PHOTO BY CARL CANATI



1972 FLH custom done up in typical '60s chopper style.



1992 FXSTS Springer Softail carries a '48-style front end.

the rear fender. Then riders began removing the front fender, extending the front end, adding chrome, spraying on custom paint jobs with air-brushed murals on the tank and side covers, and even hand-fabricating various motorcycle components. These custom-modified bob-jobs or choppers were the breeding ground for a new aftermarket industry that produced lightweight, high-performance and dress-up parts for Harley-Davidsons—an industry that has grown to multimillion-dollar proportions. Magazines such as *Easyriders* and *American Iron* cater to Harley builders and riders exclusively.

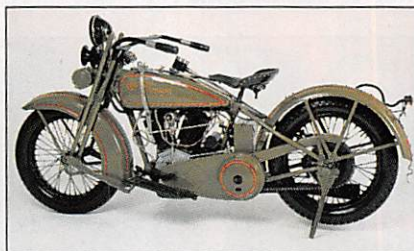
Harley customizers such as Dave Perewitz and Arlen Ness have styling clout to rival custom-car notables like George Barris and Roly Fernandez. Aftermarket parts are so extensive that it's even possible (though expensive) to build an entire motorcycle from non-factory catalogs.

The individualistic Harley attitude gradually developed into a lifestyle and a subculture that revolved around motorcycles. Outlaw groups, while achieving a high profile, really accounted for only a small minority of the Harley breed.

The extent of Harley rider bonding is evident today in the Harley Owners Group (HOG). Organized and run by the parent company with local chapters operated through its dealership network, HOG—with about 150,000 members—may well be the largest private club anywhere. The Harley mystique cuts across economic and social strata in a cult that has become a vast melting pot. Where else can outlaws, laborers, doctors and CEOs stand as equals—drawn together by one brand of motorcycle. And that's not just in the United States. Today, the Harley phenomenon spans the globe.

The loyalty among Harleyphiles extends not just to the hardware, but to the company itself. Harley-Davidson has accomplished what few American businesses have been able to do.

Beset by foreign competition, financial obstacles and internal problems, Harley-Davidson came perilously close to the edge. Then, Phoenix-like, it rose above its adversities, created a



Immaculately restored 1927 V-twin.

revitalized product and achieved a dominant niche in a fiercely competitive market.

Harley-Davidson, the motorcycle if not the mystique, had its beginnings

in 1903. Three Davidson brothers—Arthur, Walter Sr., William—and one William S. Harley founded the company. They worked out of a shed so small, it was once picked up and carried by hand. The famous twin-cylinder V-engine, with a displacement of 45 cu. in., was introduced in the mid-'20s.

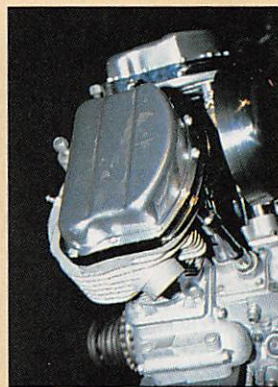
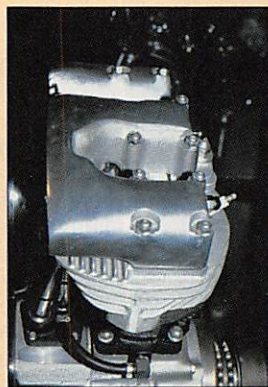
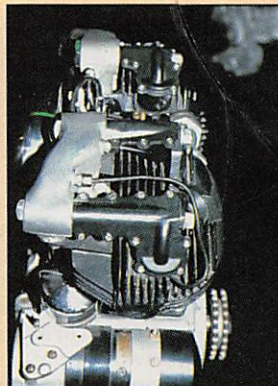
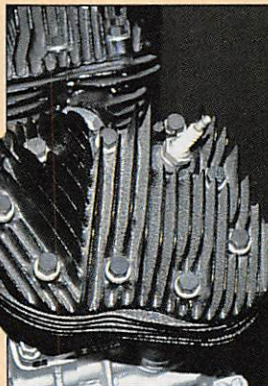
The V-twin was enlarged to 61 cu. in. in 1936. Nicknamed the Knucklehead for the distinctive shape of its valve covers, the powerhouse featured a then-revolutionary combination: overhead valves and a fully recirculating oil system. A factory-built, streamlined, Knuckle-powered racer shattered the existing speed records. The "Big Twin" phrase found its way into Harley-Davidson advertising in 1941, when the engine went to 74 cu. in. The Knucklehead was superseded

PM PHOTO BY CARL CANATI

The Harley Heads

Harley-Davidson V-twin engines have long been identified by the unique shape of their heads and valve covers.

Clockwise from top left: Flathead was offered in 45-, 74- and 80-in. displacements. Knucklehead was the first overhead valve design, and was available in 61- and 74-in. sizes. The engine developed a reputation for being bulletproof. Panhead featured aluminum head with bronze valve guides. It displaced 74 cu. in. Shovelhead design came in 74- and 80-in. displacements. It featured steel rockers mounted in the aluminum cover.



PM PHOTOS BY CLIFF GROMER



1992 FLSTC Heritage Softail Classic recalls the '49 Hydra-Glide.



1992 Sportster 883 Hugger is the lowest-sitting new Harley.

by the Panhead engine in 1948. The new 74-incher came with an all-aluminum cylinder head, plus extensive use of the light alloy for substantial weight savings and heat dissipation. Improved top-end lubrication, push-rod-type hydraulic lifters and redesigned rocker arms to minimize maintenance and engine noise were other benefits.

Harley's detail engineering improvements were in stark contrast to Detroit's preoccupation with annual cosmetic styling changes. In 1949, it pioneered the use of the hydraulically damped telescopic front suspension in its Hydra-Glide model—a concept that would become an industry standard. Nine years later, they added rear hydraulic shock suspension on a model dubbed the Duo-Glide.

Later on, much of the engineering

going on in Milwaukee would be in answer to the import-bike invasion. An optional foot gearchange similar to European motorcycles appeared in 1952. Standard Harleys were shifted



World War II WLA model in fighting trim.

automotive style with a foot clutch and gas-tank-mounted hand lever.

Bigger things began to happen in '52, as Harley went back to its roots to create a new, compact junior twin—

the K-model. It was a radically revamped version of the old 45-in. series that had started in 1929. Of particular note were a new crankcase that contained the transmission, primary drive in unit with the engine—a feature almost a decade ahead of the competition—and swing-arm frame. A race version—the KR—would win races for decades to come.

Harley fired a big salvo against the imports in 1957 with its potent and lean Sportster—an evolution of the K-model with 55 cu. in., overhead valves and magneto ignition on many models. The Sportster's spartan design was a significant departure from the Big Twin, which had oversized everything to benefit the touring rider. Performance was outstanding, and the bike quickly gained a reputation as an unbeatable street racer.

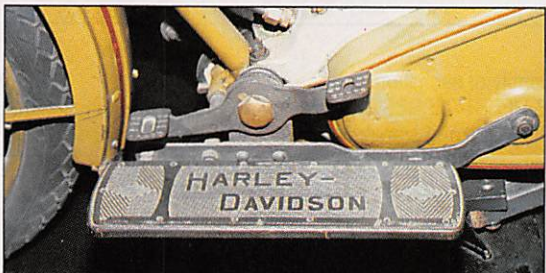
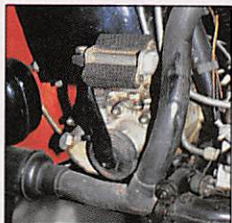
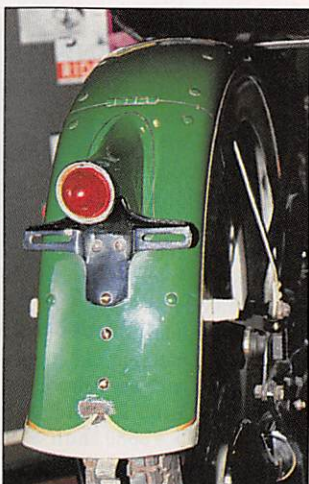
Meanwhile, Harley went on perfecting its tried-and-true big brother. A new Shovelhead design emerged along with electric starting in the mid-'60s Electra-Glide. Engine displacement was enlarged once again in 1978, this time to 80 cu. in. Refinements and improvements continued to flow from Milwaukee in the ensuing years—electronic ignition, five forward speeds and unique belt-drive systems that eliminated the problems of chains.

Today, approaching its 90th birthday, Harley-Davidson still has the vitality of a teenager. Its share of the U.S. heavyweight motorcycle market—more than 40%—is the envy of the industry. Harley still continues innovating with the industry's first application of electrostatic powder coating of parts in 1991 and O-ring sealed drive chains for '92. Rumor has it that the factory's next-year production is already completely sold out. Consortia of overseas buyers scour garages and shops nationwide for Harleys—in any condition. So well entrenched is Harley in American folklore and spirit that owning one is like owning a personal piece of the American dream.

FM

Harley-Davidsons were known for their unique styling touches.

Clockwise from below: the bicycle pedal kick-starter, the tank-mounted hand shifter, hinged rear fender, beautiful tank-mounted speedometer and warning lights, and floorboards instead of footpegs.



CALL TOLL FREE 24 HRS. A DAY

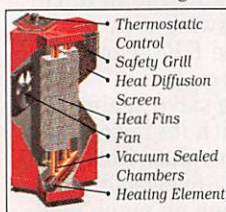
800-872-5200

ORDER WITH CONFIDENCE

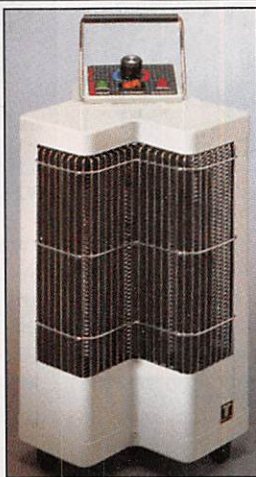
- No risk 30-day return privilege.
- Most orders ship within 48 hours of receipt.
- Credit Card orders billed only upon shipment.

THE ROOM HEATER THAT BEATS OTHERS COLD

The safe, compact Heatech heater leaps a generation beyond other heaters on the market. The heart of the Heatech is a fast and effective vacuum technology, developed for the U.S. Government, which causes water to boil almost instantly at about 130°F, instead of the usual 212°F. While warm air from most other heaters rises wastefully to the ceiling, Heatech performs with all-around efficiency. Its cabinet design, multidirectional heat flow and large volume air-flow fan warms your room more evenly from the floor up. In tests against leading electric heaters, it heated a room (15' x 12' x 8'), raising temperature by 20°F, up to 6 times faster --with more uniform temperatures --using less energy. In addition to performance and economy, the 1500-watt Heatech features 4 important safety devices: automatic tip-over switch; thermal-sensing switch; fuse protected circuitry; and a pressure-relief valve. Its safe design makes it virtually impossible to create a



flame, so the UL fire-hazard warning sticker is not required. Its surface temperature is up to 205°F lower than other types of heaters on the market, making it safe around children and pets. At 11 lbs. and a compact 16" x 10-1/4" x 9-1/4", it requires only one sq. ft. of floor space. Chase your chills away with one of the safest, quickest portable heaters available. U.S.A. made and backed with a Mfr.'s 2-yr. ltd. warranty. UL listed. 5120BTU. **\$129.95 #3790.**



WAKE UP TO WARMTH AND COMFORT

Get the same high performance and safety with more economy. Order your Heatech with an energy saving digital clock timer. Simply set the automatic on/off switch and Heatech turns itself on to warm your room at your selected time every day --then safely turns itself off so you don't forget. **\$159.95 #3795.**



A QUANTUM LEAP FORWARD FROM ELECTRIC BLANKETS

The Sunbeam Bedwarmer elevates sleeping comfort to the highest level ever. It warms you faster, more efficiently because it fits under your bottom sheet --not over your body like an electric blanket. Here's the big difference: its exclusive Personal Monitoring (PM) System™ acts like hundreds of tiny thermostats to sense --and satisfy --the individual warmth requirements of each square inch of you. If your toes are icy and your upper body is toasty, PM will actually generate more heat under your toes, less under your upper body. As you shift, PM shifts with you to keep delivering warmth where you need it. Its three graduated warming zones bring more heat to your body's lower third, less to your middle third, none



to your upper third --the way you naturally like it. Lighted controls allow you to set your desired heat level. Machine washable. UL Listed. Mfr.'s 5 yr. ltd. warranty. Twin **\$59.95 #3880**, Full **\$79.95 #3890**, Queen (dual controls) **\$99.95 #3900**, King (dual controls) **\$129.95 #3910.**



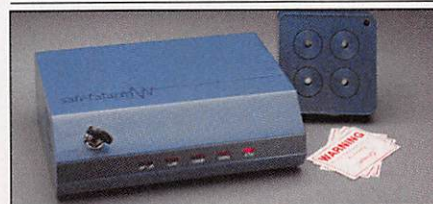
1. Heatless Zone 2. Moderate Heat Zone 3. Warmest Zone

CUSTOM BACK SUPPORT



The Air Belt is designed to help you relieve and prevent back pain without restricting your movements. You can enjoy some activities that were once off-limits because of lower back pain. Simply squeeze the removable aspirator bulb to inflate belt for your individualized lumbar support. A unique system of air chambers gently applies pressure to help relax your muscles and encourage proper alignment of your lower back. The contoured shape is comfortable and flexible to allow you a full range of movement. You can walk, run, garden, play tennis, ski or just sit for hours in comfort. Made of soft, breathable material to keep you cool and dry. Adjustable, hand-washable. Consult your doctor before using your Air Belt. **\$59.95 Medium (29"-35") #3590**, Large (36"-41") **#3600** or Extra Large (42"-50") **#3605.**

PROTECT YOUR HOME



Now you can help protect your home or small business at an affordable price. The Safe-T-Alarm is easy for you to install and set. No complicated wiring, programming or keypads. Plug into any standard household outlet and turn the key. Effective 'shock wave' sensor system detects forced entry and wards off intruders with a piercing alarm that lasts 20 minutes and then resets. Internal battery back-up works up to 24 hours during power failures --or if unit wires are unplugged or cut. Normal household movements, children or pets will not trigger annoying false alarms. About the size of an answering machine, Safe-T-Alarm fits conveniently on counter top or shelf --or easily mounts on wall. Includes 2 keys and deterrent decals for windows and door. 2 yr. Mfr.'s ltd. warranty. Put an affordable measure of security in your home or small office today. **\$349.95 #4180.**

THE LIFESTYLE RESOURCE®

FOR FASTEST SERVICE 24 HRS. A DAY

800-872-5200

• DEPT. PMCC02; 4555 LYMAN DRIVE, HILLIARD, OH 43026

CREDIT CARD ORDERS - CALL TOLL FREE

TO ORDER BY MAIL:

- Send us a letter to the above address specifying the item number, dept. code, and quantity of each item.
- Total the amount, add shipping charge (see table below) make check payable to: THE LIFESTYLE RESOURCE.
- For MasterCard, Visa and American Express include your full account number, expiration date and signature.

ORDER WITH CONFIDENCE

- Most orders ship within 48 hours of receipt.
- Credit Card orders billed only upon shipment.
- No risk 30-day return privilege.

Shipping Charge covers UPS, handling and insurance for guaranteed delivery.

Federal Express delivery available for an additional \$7.50 per order.

Up to \$40.....	\$ 5.95	\$100.01 to \$150.....	\$14.95
\$40.01 to \$50.....	\$ 6.95	\$150.01 to \$200.....	\$16.95
\$50.01 to \$70.....	\$ 8.95	\$200.01 to \$250.....	\$19.95
\$70.01 to \$100.....	\$11.95	Over \$250.....	\$21.95

Canadian residents, we can only accept telephone orders.